

Message Text

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TAGS: ELAB, SP

SUBJ: SPANISH LABOR AND STRIKE SITUATION

REF: A. MADRID 2258 B. MADRID 664 C. MADRID 1353

1. SUMMARY: LABOR SCENE HAS BEEN RELATIVELY QUIET RECENTLY, DESPITE UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORTS CONVOKE VARIOUS "DAYS OF STRUGGLE" AND CURRENT TRIAL OF PAMPLONA MINERS. FORTHCOMING LABOR EVENTS WILL REPORTEDLY INCLUDE MINOR ATTEMPTS AT MAY DAY DISTURBANCES, POSSIBLE UNVEILING OF DECREE-LAW GRANTING RIGHT TO STRIKE BY NEW LABOR MINISTER, AND CONVOCAION NATIONWIDE SSO ELECTIONS COMMENCING IN LATE MAY. END SUMMARY

2. DURING PAST SIX WEEKS INTENSITY AND FREQUENCY OF STRIKES HAS SUBSIDED APPRECIABLY. LAST MAJOR PROLONGED STRIKE WAS AT FIRESTONE FACTORY IN BILBAO (REF A) WHICH ENDED WHEN 3,500 STRIKING WORKERS RETURNED TO WORK ON APRIL 4 AFTER TWO AND ONE-HALF MONTHS, DESPITE FACT BASIC ISSUES STILL UNRESOLVED.

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3. REASONS FOR SUBSTANTIAL DIMINUTION STRIKES INCLUDE:

(A) FACT MOST COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS HAVE BY NOW BEEN SIGNED; (B) NEW GET-TOUGH POLICY BY GOVT; (C) GENERAL FATIGUE AMONG WORKERS AFTER SEVERAL STRIKE-PRONE MONTHS; (D) MARKED INCREASE IN WORKER DISMISSALS IN RETALIATION FOR STRIKE ACTIVITY; (E) INHIBITING IMPACT OF STEADILY INCREASING UNEMPLOYMENT; AND (F) PRONOUNCED DECREASE IN LABOR TENSION AS RESULT SUPREME COURT'S LATE FEBRUARY DECISION REDUCING SENTENCES OF JAILED "CARABANCHEL TEN" WORKERS COMMISSIONS LEADERS.

4. DESPITE THIS DIMINUTION, VARIOUS CLANDESTINE LABOR GROUPS, E.G., COMMUNIST-DOMINATED WORKERS COMMISSIONS, HAVE BEEN SEEKING TO PROMOTE "DAYS OF STRUGGLE", MATCHING COMMUNIST GOAL OF GENERAL STRIKES. "DAYS OF STRUGGLE" WERE CONVOKED IN MADRID, SEVILLE, SAN SEBASTIAN, MALAGA, VALENCIA, BILBAO, AND BARCELONA DURING MARCH AND APRIL. THESE ATTEMPTS WERE FAILURES WITH ONLY MINUTE NUMBERS OF WORKERS RESPONDING TO THE STRIKE APPEALS.

5. CURRENT TRIAL OF 47 MINERS AT PAMPLONA LABOR COURT, WHICH IS ATTRACTING MUCH ATTENTION, CONCERNS FIRING OF 47 MINERS IN RETALIATION FOR A TWO-WEEK SIT-IN STRIKE IN PAMPLONA POTASSIUM MINE IN JANUARY (REF ?). TRIAL HAS ALREADY BEEN MARKED BY SEVERAL BRIEF SUSPENSIONS BECAUSE OF LACK OF ORDER AND OBSTRUCTIONIST TACTICS OF DEFENSE LAWYERS IN PACKED COURTROOM.

6. INTEREST IS NOW FOCUSING ON PERIOD AROUND MAY 1 WHEN CLANDESTINE LABOR AND POLITICAL GROUPS HAVE TRADITIONALLY SOUGHT TO FOMENT STRIKES AND DEMONSTRATIONS, ALTHOUGH WITHOUT MUCH SUCCESS IN RECENT YEARS. THIS YEAR THERE APPEARS TO BE LESS INTEREST IN FOMENTING SUCH DISORDERS BY THE MORE TRADITIONAL LABOR AND POLITICAL OPPOSITION GROUPS, INCLUDING WORKERS COMMISSIONS, BUT EXTREMIST LEFTIST GROUPS SUCH AS MAOIST FRAP AND TROTSKYITE LCR ARE REPORTEDLY PLANNING TO STIR UP TROUBLE.

7. IN APRIL 7 TV APPEARANCE NEW LABOR MINISTER FERNANDO SUAREZ GONZALEZ (AN EMBASSY IVP GRANTEE IN 1972) AND FINANCE MINISTER CABELLO DE ALBA ANNOUNCED NEW ECONOMIC MEASURES TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COMBAT RECESSION. SUAREZ ANNOUNCED THT GOVT WILL HENCEFORTH ONLY ALLOW WAGE INCREASES EQUAL TO THE OFFICIAL COST OF LIVING INDEX INCREASES PLUS THREE PERCENT, A MEASURE WHICH COULD PROVOKE FURTHER LABOR UNREST. SUAREZ IS ALSO WRESTLING WITH ISSUE OF DECREE WHICH WOULD GRANT A MODIFIED RIGHT TO STRIKE, ISSUE WHICH CAUSED RESIGNATION OF HIS PREDECESSOR (REF C). SUAREZ HAS PRIVATELY INDICATED HE HOPES TO GET A DECREE-LAW GRANTING SUCH

A MODIFIED RIGHT TO STRIKE APPROVED BY CABINET
IN NEAR FUTURE.

8. ISSUE WHICH CURRENTLY AROUSES MOST INTEREST IN EXPECTED FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS IN GOVT-CONTROLLED SPANISH SYNDICAL ORGANIZATION (SSO). THESE ELECTIONS, COMMENCING WITH PLANT LEVEL ELECTIONS FOR 200,000 SHOP STEWARDS, AND CONTINUING IN SUCCESSIVE PHASES WITH INDIRECT ELECTIONS AT LOCAL, PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS, WERE SUPPOSED TO COMMENCE THIS SPRING. HOWEVER, FACT THE SSO ELECTORAL CALENDAR HAS NOT YET BEEN ANNOUNCED, LEADS SOME TO BELIEVE GOVT MAY POSTPONE THEM. GENERAL IMPRESSION, HOWEVER, IS THAT GOVT WILL ANNOUNCE DATES WITHIN NEXT FEW DAYS, WITH PLANT-LEVEL ELECTIONS CONVOKED FOR LATE MAY. MOST CLANDESTINE LABOR GROUPS ARE GOING TO PARTICIPATE IN SSO ELECTIONS IN HOPE GETTING THEIR MILITANTS ELECTED TO POSITIONS FROM WHICH THEY CAN INFILTRATE AND SUBVERT SSO HIERARCHY. SOCIALIST UGT, HOWEVER, WILL MAINTAIN ITS POSITION OF PREVIOUS YEARS URGING BOYCOTT ON GROUNDS PARTICIPATION SUPPORTS "FASCIST" SSO AND FRANCO REGIME. SSO' CONSERVATIVE FALANGIST-ORIENTED LEADERSHIP CONCERNED OVER ELECTIONS BOTH BECAUSE OF THREAT TO THEIR OWN POSITIONS AND BECAUSE OF DANGER SO AMPLY DEMONSTRATED IN PAST, THAT COMMUNISTS AND OTHER "UNDESIRABLES" WILL BE ELECTED TO SSO POSITIONS.

9. COMMENT: OUTCOME SSO ELECTIONS LIKELY TO BE RELATIVELY HIGH TURNOUT IN RELATIVELY FREE ELECTIONS AND ELECTION OF SIGNIFICANT NUMBER MEMBERS OF CLANDESTINE LABOR GROUPS TO SSO SHOP STEWARD POSITIONS. FOR MORE INDIRECT LATER ELECTIONS TO LOCAL, PROVINCIAL, AND NATIONAL SSO POSITIONS, ELECTORAL MECHANISMS ONCE AGAIN LIKELY TO BE RIGGED AND MANIPULATED, AS IN PAST, BY SSP, SO THAT SSO STALWARTS WILL END UP BEING ELECTED THOSE POSITIONS.

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10. STRIKE ACTIVITY LIKELY BE RELATIVELY LIMITED DURING NEXT TWO MONTHS, DUE TO ATTENTION WORKERS AND CLANDESTINE GROUPS WILL FOCUS ON SSO ELECTIONS. SHOULD SSO ELECTIONS BE POST-PONED, HOWEVER, THIS COULD CONTRIBUTE TO RESUMPTION STRIKE ACTIVITY.
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